

occurs and that previously it had either not been sought in these areas or else was at lower population densities and eluded detection. It is conceivable that it has become more widespread in the Severn Vale area, but the area has previously been very poorly recorded for ants. *Leptothorax nylanderi* (Forster) is also proving widespread here and some form of association is suggested, but this requires more study. The distribution of the two species nationally overlaps considerably.

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SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Firebugs *Pyrrhocoris apterus* (L.) (Hemiptera: Pyrrhocoridae) breeding in Surrey.— A colony of this distinctive RDBI bug was found by the senior author in Epsom, Surrey (TQ2161) in the summer of 1996. Nymphs and adults have been recorded beside a 50m stretch of alley-way through the Longmead industrial estate. The colony appears to be centred on the ground beneath an overhanging lime tree. In July 1997, adults and nymphs were abundant on the ground amongst brambles and nettles, and were observed feeding on fallen grass seeds, and blackberries. Smaller numbers occurred beneath a single Common Mallow plant c. 30m from the lime tree, where they fed on the fallen fruits. However, none were found beneath any of the other extensive patches of Mallow examined in the area.

All the adults examined, c. 30 to date, were short-winged and unable to fly. How the colony came to be here remains enigmatic, constituting as it does the first breeding record for Surrey although specimens were found at Ripley in February 1995 (Halstead, 1995). It will be interesting to see if the colony can survive and spread, joining the increasing list of new immigrants or formerly coastal bugs establishing inland colonies in the south of England. Thanks to Roger Hawkins for his advice and helpful comments. — DIANA ASHWELL, 94 Farriers Rd, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1LR & JONTY DENTON, 26 Bow St, Alton, Hants GU34 1NY.

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